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General Assembly

Official Records

First Committee

5th Meeting
Wednesday, 15 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman: I would like to remind delegations to limit their statements, as much as possible, to the 15-minute time limit.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as the Chairman of the First Committee. I wish you every success.

Recently, there has been an unprecedented groundswell of interest and support among the international community for nuclear disarmament. The broad spectrum of the international community clamouring for the elimination of nuclear weapons includes not only Member States of the United Nations, but also non-State entities and individuals such as the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the International Court of Justice, non-governmental organizations and ex-military officials of some nuclear-weapon States. This is indeed a very encouraging trend.

Significant developments are taking place in the area of bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We welcome the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties and the deep reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Russian Federation. We look forward to the full implementation of these treaties. We also note with appreciation the unilateral measures taken by some nuclear-weapon States.

We must, however, stress here that in carrying out nuclear disarmament measures the nuclear-weapon States must do so in good faith and in the larger interests of the international community, which are also consistent with their national interests, but must not try to circumvent treaty provisions in order to gain technical and strategic advantage. In this respect, we were concerned to learn of the recent subcritical nuclear tests carried out by one nuclear-weapon State. What we want is the total cessation of all nuclear tests -- be they subcritical or supercritical, explosive or non-explosive — in all environments, for all time.

Turning to the activities of the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, we regret that there was a standstill in the work of the Conference on Disarmament during its 1997 session. Some nuclear-weapon States are still reluctant to conduct discussions and negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. That is why the Conference on Disarmament finds itself in a standstill situation on nuclear disarmament and other related issues.

The main contention of these nuclear-weapon States is that nuclear disarmament — that is, a phased programme of reductions of nuclear weapons leading to their elimination — is the exclusive domain of bilateral negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States. This contention is fatally flawed. It is morally indefensible, logically incoherent and politically unacceptable.

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As all of us are aware, nuclear war knows no boundary. An outbreak of nuclear war will certainly affect the security of all nations and all humanity. How can they claim that matters relating to the removal of the nuclear threat and the elimination of these weapons are their exclusive concern and domain? As a matter of fact, the nuclear threat infringes upon the very fundamental human right of humanity: the right to life.

Moreover, if we look at the record of disarmament agreements in the past, we shall find that all multilateral disarmament agreements banning weapons of mass destruction and other weapon systems involve not only weapon-possessing States, but also non-weapon States, right from the negotiation phase to the final stage of signature and adherence. To cite just a few examples, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and, most recently, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Why should the Conference be denied the role for which it has been established? Why should nuclear weapons be an exception to this well-established rule?

In view of the above and several other sound reasons which I could go on citing, it is evident that there is a need to multilateralize nuclear disarmament negotiations and start substantive work on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament. We do recognize that bilateral negotiations between the nuclear- weapon States will play a major role, particularly in the negotiation of specific detailed measures and steps in the nuclear disarmament process. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament can and should play an important and useful role in working out a general framework agreement or agreements on nuclear disarmament. We take the view that multilateral and bilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament are not mutually exclusive, but that they are complementary to one another and mutually reinforcing.

This indeed constitutes the rationale and main thrust of resolutions 50/70 P and 51/45 O on nuclear disarmament, which my delegation introduced, with the co-sponsorship of many countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the General Assembly respectively. My delegation will introduce a follow-up draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at this year's session as well. We hope that in view of the immense importance of the subject Member States will once again give overwhelming support to the draft resolution.

A ban on fissile materials is a question that needs to be addressed with great urgency. An Ad Hoc Committee on fissile materials was established in the Conference on Disarmament in 1995. The Committee was, however, unable to carry out any substantive work. It is regrettable that since then the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material and to make any progress on this issue. We should spare no efforts to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament and commence negotiations on this subject as soon as possible.

Another important nuclear issue is that of security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. The time is indeed opportune to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument providing security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We should further pursue our efforts in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to make substantive progress and produce concrete results on this important issue.

At a time when we are considering the reform of the United Nations in the General Assembly, it is only fitting that we should also review the role of the Conference on Disarmament and find ways and means to revitalize and strengthen it. May I express here, in passing, a few thoughts on this issue.

In my view, flexibility is the key word in this task. The working method and the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament are in themselves quite flexible. If we could add a few more flexible practices and applications here and there, it could be helpful in overcoming some difficulties encountered by the Conference. Equally important is, of course, the flexibility of the positions of the Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

In all their wisdom and foresight, the drafters of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament rightly laid down priorities for disarmament negotiations, giving the highest priority to nuclear disarmament and related nuclear issues. Undoubtedly, we should abide by these priorities, which still remain valid today.

There have been several proposals to introduce conventional arms control issues in the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament so that it may be better

balanced. My delegation is prepared to consider such proposals. We must, however, ensure that conventional arms control issues are correctly chosen and accurately identified. The issue of anti-personnel landmines could have been a suitable subject for negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament. Another issue that merits serious consideration as a subject for discussion in the Conference on Disarmament is that of illicit trafficking in small arms.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament. Its main function is to negotiate arms limitation and disarmament treaties and agreements. This role should remain and be further strengthened. At the same time, we may also encourage useful pre-negotiation processes or preparatory work that will prepare the ground and facilitate negotiations. In fact, this is what the Conference on Disarmament has already been doing. The appointment of thematic special coordinators is such a process.

Last year, my delegation, in a statement in this Committee, made a proposal that, in the event that consensus still eluded us on a separate ad hoc committee, the Conference on Disarmament might establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with two working groups dealing with nuclear disarmament and fissile materials, respectively. We feel that, if the Conference on Disarmament finds itself in the same situation once again at its 1998 session, this proposal can still be further pursued.

Our position is well known. We should like to see the establishment of a separate ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, on a priority basis, and the commencement of negotiations on the subject at an early date. However, in the event that consensus for this remains elusive at the beginning of the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we may adopt one of the aforementioned alternative approaches, as appropriate.

With regard to the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, we believe that urgent tasks before the Conference are nuclear disarmament, a ban on fissile materials, and negative security assurances. Whatever programme of work the Conference on Disarmament may adopt at its 1998 session, it must include these crucial issues.

This is a year of reform for the United Nations. The General Assemble is considering the reform package proposed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General, in his reform package, to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, to be headed by a very senior official with the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

As regards the institutional reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his reform package, these reform measures should be carefully studied and thoroughly discussed before we take firm decisions on them. It is crucially important that emphasis be appropriately placed in these institutional reforms. The principled stand of my delegation is that emphasis should be placed on the objective of disarmament, rather than merely on its non-proliferation aspect. We are therefore in favour of strengthening the Geneva branch of the new Department, which is actually providing support facilities and services for disarmament negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Last month, the Conference in Oslo finalized a draft convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines. We are supportive of banning the export and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In our view, we should address the real issues of the question, rather than impose a sweeping ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that every nation should have the right to self-defence in matters of its national self-defence.

I should now like to turn briefly to the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Centre has been most active in promoting security dialogue among the Member States in the region. We fully appreciate and support the regional security dialogue process, known as the Kathmandu process, initiated by the Regional Centre. The ongoing series of regional conferences and seminars as part of the Kathmandu process have provided the countries in the region with excellent opportunities to address important regional and international disarmament issues and their security concerns. With these activities, the Regional Centre has made a significant contribution to the promotion of security dialogue and the cause of peace and security in the region. Accordingly, we should like to see a further expansion of these activities by the Regional Centre for the benefit of the countries in the region.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is generally considered to be the first step in the nuclear disarmament process. Now this first step has been taken, but a long road lies ahead of us. The issues are so important and the time so opportune that we cannot afford

a standstill. We must redouble our efforts to move forward on these crucial issues.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): I should like to begin by expressing my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We remain confident, that under your guidance, we will register substantive progress in dealing with a number of important issues on our agenda.

The First Committee is meeting against the backdrop of some encouraging developments in arms control and disarmament. The Helsinki summit held last March between the leaders of the United States and the Russian Federation, which reaffirmed the commitment of the two leading nuclear Powers to implement the provisions of START II and to initiate negotiations for further reductions in nuclear armaments, was a significant step forward. Likewise, after years of stalemate, the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the Ukraine on the Black Sea Fleet is an encouraging development.

Considerable progress has also been made in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, which has become an irreversible trend towards a denuclearized world. Thus, the four existing zones and a prospective new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia would include a majority of nations covering a vast land mass and its people. The Preparatory Committee for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference began its task in earnest last April, focusing on the main provisions of the Treaty and on the structures of the new review process. And in an unprecedented stand taken in last December, 61 generals and admirals from 17 countries, some of whom have commanded nuclear forces, questioned the utility of nuclear weapons, which pose the greatest threat to global security, and called for the reduction of arsenals to very low levels through deep cuts, with the ultimate objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

These positive developments notwithstanding, we cannot be oblivious to the dangers posed by the continued existence of nuclear arsenals. Even though the two leading nuclear Powers are no longer locked in military confrontation and the prospect of nuclear holocaust has receded, thousands of nuclear weapons are still on trigger alert. The dangers inherent in high-alert status have long been self-evident. On land, intercontinental ballistic missiles are ready to launch within minutes, and at sea nuclear-armed submarines are on round-the-clock patrol.

Further compounding the situation is the absence of agreements that call for the dismantling of nuclear warheads or proposals to move beyond START II. The lack of reliable command and control systems has increased the risk of technical malfunctions, ageing and obsolete weapons, early-warning system failures, the inadvertent or accidental use of nuclear weapons, seizures of weapons or weapon materials, and threats or actual use by non-state actors. We should also note the announcement by a nuclear-weapon State to conduct subcritical tests, which would be inconsistent with the spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), lead to the increased sophistication of weapons and constitute a serious setback to the ongoing efforts to stem proliferation and to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Hence, with the diminished role and utility of nuclear weapons and their continued unacceptable risks, it is time to remove nuclear weapons from alert status, to renounce their use and to initiate negotiations for START III, seeking further deep reductions on strategic weapons while dismantling warheads and not just delivery systems, such as missiles, which have been the focus of all previous arms control agreements.

There is also a need to take a fresh look at the question of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, rationalizations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons need to be discarded. So long as the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring security is not delegitimized and existing nuclear doctrines are not abandoned, there will always be a threat of a resumption of the nuclear arms race and the escalation of the nuclear threat. It is therefore incumbent upon us to translate the objective of eliminating nuclear weapons from a rhetorical goal into a reality. This calls for sustained multilateral efforts to identify, negotiate and implement specific step-by-step measures for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Against this sombre backdrop, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to reach a consensus on establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a given time-frame.

The question of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since its forty-ninth session, and is supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States. Since the Cartagena Summit held in 1995, the Non-Aligned Movement has considered this issue of paramount

importance in order to assess the successes and setbacks of the past and to set the future course of action on a broad spectrum of disarmament and related issues. It has been self-evident that the unilateral policies and partial measures of the past no longer suffice and that the multi-dimensional nature of armaments calls for a collective approach. In the proposals for reform of the United Nations, the Secretary-General called disarmament a

> "central issue on the global agenda" [A/51/950, para. 122]

and said that:

> "nations ... have come to recognize their stake in the success of multilateral negotiations ... As a consequence, the United Nations has taken centre stage in the worldwide effort to limit both weapons and conflict." [*ibid.*]

Hence the resurgence of the United Nations and renewed trust in its capacity to deal effectively with disarmament issues make it obligatory on the part of Member States to mobilize the necessary political will and to utilize the Organization in a more purposeful way to sustain the disarmament process.

In this context, it was my delegation's privilege to submit a working paper containing the views of the Non-Aligned Movement, which we believe has made a distinct contribution in clarifying the issues involved. Furthermore, Indonesia, in its capacity as Chairman of the Working Group of the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the issue of convening SSOD IV, submitted a paper which contains a list of possible agenda items that may be addressed by the Disarmament Commission at its next session. These and other proposals, taken together, offer heightened prospects for the emergence of a consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV and the drafting of a forward-looking plan of action that may lead to its being convened on the eve of the new millennium.

The task ahead, however, calls for both vision and foresight concerning our long-term and short-term objectives, the identification of specific measures at both the global and regional levels, together with their time-frame, as well as the essential components and characteristics of our disarmament agenda and institutional arrangements. These and a host of other pertinent issues will have to be addressed and clarified during the preparatory stage if we are to proceed further and lay a solid foundation for our disarmament endeavours.

As far as anti-personnel landmines are concerned, the Ottawa process represents a significant accomplishment as it seeks to prohibit the signatories from producing, using or stockpiling such landmines and requires that they remove those that are already sown. But the Ottawa process, while an important part of our endeavours to rid the world of mines, does not provide a complete and final answer to dealing with the multitude of problems posed by these landmines. It should be acknowledged that it is an issue with both humanitarian and national security implications. We are fully cognizant of the humanitarian gains of a ban on anti-personnel landmines which have taken an unconscionable toll on civilians. In recognition of these realities and because of our firm commitment to a mine-free world, Indonesia has contributed to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and participated in various international forums and instruments such as the inhumane weapons Convention landmine Protocol and the Ottawa process.

However, we should take into account the need for anti-personnel landmines for national defence purposes, while stressing that humanitarian considerations should not be subordinated to vital security interests. My delegation therefore realizes the complexity attendant upon achieving an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, which also has financial and technical implications. A cautious approach would be needed when addressing a question of such importance and magnitude. Thus, while Indonesia is fully aware that anti-personnel landmines have adverse humanitarian effects, negotiations must necessarily take into account the diverse perspectives of all nations.

The staggering cost of $33 billion and the millennial time-scale projected for demining endeavours call for concerted international efforts, which should address, among other issues, distrust between adversaries, a shortage of resources and trained personnel, the laying of new minefields, the dearth of advanced new demining techniques and new tools to detect mines — all leading to a coordinated approach to faster and more effective ways to clear the scourge of mines. In my delegation's view, the magnitude of such a task can only be undertaken with the expertise and experience of the Conference on Disarmament.

Meanwhile, the amendment to Protocol II of the inhumane weapons Convention contains comprehensive provisions for the scope of application, restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines, a ban on transfers, their removal, protection against their harmful effects, and

technical cooperation. Until such time as all States can accept a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, this amendment should constitute part of a broader strategy that could substantially reduce the disastrous effects of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines.

Finally, the proposal to re-establish the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation is under the authority of the Secretary-General. However, the priority to be accorded to the Department — namely, non-proliferation issues — would seem incompatible with the principles, priorities and Programme of Action adopted by consensus at the conclusion of SSOD I, and which retain their validity and relevance.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for submitting document A/52/CRP.3 to the General Assembly today. The presentation of additional information and clarification concerning his proposal is indeed both timely and appropriate so as to shed light on the Assembly's deliberations on the issue. It has persuaded us to expect greater clarity on the overall issue of re-establishing the Department to deal with disarmament and related issues, and we will be studying carefully the contents of the document with a view to expressing our views during the consideration of the reform proposal.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): At the outset of my intervention, let me express to you, Mr. Chairman, my sincere felicitations on your election to the Chair of the First Committee. We are pleased to see an eminent son of Africa and distinguished representative of Botswana preside over deliberations that relate to the concerns that are most vital to all of us — those of peace and security in the world. You can rely, Sir, on my delegation's good will and full cooperation in the discharge of your important mandate.

Poland fully subscribes to and strongly associates itself with the statement that Luxembourg made in this debate on behalf of the European Union. For this reason, it is my intention to confine my intervention to some "country-specific" questions that are of direct interest to Poland and relate to its vital security interests.

In that regard, two events of epochal dimensions took place last July. First, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), at a summit conference in Madrid, extended an invitation to Poland, as well as to the Czech Republic and Hungary, to open negotiations concerning their membership in the alliance. Secondly, the members of the European Union (EU) approved the *avis* of the European Commission, a step which in effect opens the door to negotiations on EU membership for Poland. Both these decisions respond to the long-standing aspirations of my compatriots. In this respect, there is a remarkable consensus of all the principal parties active on Poland's political scene.

These two events are going to recast the political situation on the European continent, especially in its East Central region. They carry major implications for the security of Poland and beyond. In his statement in Warsaw following the Madrid meeting, the President of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, declared *inter alia*, in the presence of President Bill Clinton, that

> "Poland does not turn its back on anyone and does not look for friends afar nor for enemies next door. Poland prides itself on the friendship and confidence it enjoys among its neighbours. Security and prosperity is our common cause and therefore we are in favour of the future expansion of NATO to other democratic countries of the region."

Over the past centuries, generations of Europeans have gone through and suffered from many a war. They have also seen numerous attempts to provide for a lasting peace and stability. A "new international order" emerged from the Congress of Vienna, then another from the Treaty of Versailles, and then yet another from Yalta. Ultimately, they all failed because of the contradictory interests of the principal actors.

The future expansion of NATO, together with such momentous developments as the NATO accords with the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the Russo-Ukrainian agreement, and the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, demonstrates that this time a totally new European order is in the making. It is an order which offers the countries of East Central Europe a historic opportunity for security, political stability, and successful development. It is an order which, in effect, obliterates the infamous post-Yalta system imposed at the close of the Second World War.

The difference now, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, is that the new order is constructed around expanding Euro-Atlantic structures, but also relies on a set of multilateral security accords and institutions, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is, moreover, an order supported by the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO

and the Russian Federation, a document that reflects the determination of NATO and Russia

> "to build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security".

Based on universally recognized democratic principles and values, economic integration and cooperative security, the Euro-Atlantic order will certainly be more resilient and dependable than any in the past. An expanding NATO is not a threat, real or imagined, to anyone. As a transparent defensive political structure, it is a factor of stability. Its primary objective is peace: to protect it, if possible, or to enforce it, if necessary.

As we approach the threshold of the twenty-first century, the fact that the international community has managed, through concerted efforts, to ban weapons of mass destruction or bring them under increasingly effective control must be cause for justified satisfaction to us all. In this respect, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) last April is an outstanding example and a success story in the unique multilateral endeavour to outlaw a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, provide for their total destruction under strict international control and effectively prevent their proliferation. Now the time has come to translate the spirit and letter of the CWC into reality. It is a challenging task.

Poland is encouraged by the first steps taken, both within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and at the national level, to implement the Convention. The requisite verification activities have started on time and in accordance with the respective provisions of the Convention. The main organs of the OPCW appear to be operating smoothly. The Executive Council of the Organization is discharging its functions as the principal decision-making body, with an eye to practical aspects of CWC implementation. Its Secretariat also appears to be fully operational in both its administrative and executive functions. The Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. José Mauricio Bustani, has demonstrated a commendable determination to build a most efficient Technical Secretariat for the Organization. We are confident that the good cooperation which now exists between the United Nations and the OPCW will be sustained. It should eventually lead to the conclusion of a formal agreement on the relationship between them, recognizing, *inter alia*, the independent status of the OPCW as an entity discharging a specific task in regard to the CWC.

As far as CWC implementation by States Parties is concerned, Poland — like many other States — has duly and punctually submitted its initial declaration and requisite notification. On the national level, the Polish parliament is preparing domestic legislation with a view to establishing a specific implementation oversight mechanism. Its key feature is to be a national authority charged with day-to-day responsibility for coordination of measures to implement the Convention.

We are confident that, apart from contributing to transparency, openness and confidence, these steps to implement the Convention will encourage other States parties to follow suit soon by submitting their declarations. It goes without saying, of course, that successful achievement of the Convention's objectives depends primarily on adherence to this instrument by all possessors of chemical weapons, as well as by States with significant chemical industries. We strongly urge all States which are still outside the Convention to sign and/or ratify it without further delay.

Poland has been actively engaged in endeavours to achieve a ban on chemical weapons. We shall spare no effort to contribute to a full and effective implementation of and universal adherence to the Convention. In keeping with a practice that has become a time-sanctioned tradition, Canada and Poland will be undertaking an initiative to submit an appropriate draft resolution in this respect for the First Committee's consideration and approval.

Pre-dating the chemical weapons ban is the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. Designed to proscribe the development, production and stockpiling or acquisition of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and to bring about their destruction, the Convention has lacked effective compliance-verification provisions. This proved to be a major lacuna, whose ominous implications came to be appreciated only in the face of troubling attempts to obtain biological-weapon capacity. Attempts at the subsequent Review Conferences of the Convention to address this shortcoming — through, *inter alia*, various confidence-building measures — have helped to enhance the process of implementation and, as a result, have contributed to the Convention's greater effectiveness. While they have enlarged and strengthened the authority of the Biological Weapons Convention, they obviously fall far short of expectations. Poland therefore commends the efforts currently being made within the open-ended Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts to draft recommendations for a legally binding compliance-verification protocol.

The international community will certainly acknowledge important and welcome developments in the nuclear area as well. These, in our view, give credence to a

> "determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons" [*NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Annex, Decision 2, para. 4(c)*].

That language of Decision 2, "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament," adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in itself eloquently illustrates the extent of the positive evolution of thinking on nuclear arms. Poland welcomes with gratification the progress made in regard to the further universalization and strengthening of the NPT, which is the mainstay of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and an integral part of the international security system. The recent accessions of Angola, Djibouti and Oman to the Treaty, as well as the stated intention of Brazil to accede make it the most widely adhered to multilateral arms control agreement.

We consider it auspicious that the first of three planned sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT, held in New York last April, made a successful bid to implement a strengthened NPT review process, in keeping with decisions of the 1995 Conference. Poland trusts that the constructive climate and spirit of positive cooperation that prevailed at the first session will also set the ground rules for the second session of the Preparatory Committee, to be convened in April 1998. That is particularly important to my delegation, and to me personally, since, if the States Parties to the NPT so agree, Poland will have the honour of presiding over those proceedings.

Pursuant to the strengthened Treaty review process that was agreed to in 1995, the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT will no doubt wish to make an assessment of whether systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally have led to meaningful results. In Poland's view, the assessment will be positive. There are at least two good reasons to justify that view.

First, as we know, at the Helsinki summit meeting last March the United States and Russia made important headway, *inter alia*, on the future of their bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions. Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin must be commended for their imagination and the sense of responsibility they demonstrated in agreeing that START III would follow START II once the latter was ratified by the Russian Duma. When implemented, the accord will have scaled down the overall numbers of strategic nuclear warheads to a fraction of the peak cold-war levels.

Secondly, the anti-ballistic missile and START II documents that were signed by Secretary of State Albright and Foreign Minister Primakov late last month here in New York should pave the way for the ratification of START II by the Russian Parliament, thus leading to a deep reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the two Powers. Poland is hopeful that the ratification of START II will indeed come very soon and that the important objectives of the Helsinki summit will stand a chance of early realization.

The programme of action referred to in the "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament" set four specific goals. The completion by the Conference on Disarmament and the subsequent opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996 met one of those goals. The Treaty has been signed by 148 countries, including all the nuclear-weapon Powers. Of the 44 States required to sign and deposit instruments of ratification in order for the Treaty to go into effect, only three have failed to sign. The international community is hopeful that, in the overriding interests of nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, of a nuclear-free world, they will reconsider their position at an early date.

An accelerated rate of CTBT ratification by its signatories would be a telling manifestation that mankind is keen to reap the benefits of the test ban. We therefore welcome with gratification President Clinton's statement at the opening of the general debate in the General Assembly that he would seek early ratification of the Treaty by the United States Senate. For its part, the Government of Poland is also taking steps leading to the ratification of that historic instrument.

In addition, we note with satisfaction the advanced state of preparations made in Vienna to launch the CTBT organization, including its compliance-verification mechanism.

At the same time, it is a matter of concern to my delegation that the second goal specified by the "Principles and Objectives" has again proved elusive. As follows from the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly, the question of a non-discriminatory and

universally applicable convention to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices has, regrettably, failed again to be addressed by the Conference on Disarmament. This failure is hard to comprehend, given the long-standing agreement to establish a suitable subsidiary organ and indeed the consensus that has emerged on its mandate. The report of the Conference on Disarmament under consideration is not only scant reading, it is also indicative of the fact that, regrettably, the political will did not exist throughout 1997 to make productive use of the time and resources available to the Conference.

As a matter of fact, the linkage of all issues before the Conference — both those with a distinct treaty-negotiating potential, such as the cut-off, and those lacking such potential — into one package must be blamed for the virtual standstill of the Conference's work in 1997. After all, the launching of cut-off negotiations would be consistent with the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It would moreover constitute yet another major step towards satisfying the stipulations of article VI of the NPT.

The report of the Conference on Disarmament indicates unmistakably that the Conference has reached a difficult point. There appears to be no meeting of minds as to which practical disarmament goals to pursue with due firmness, dedication and competence. We would wish that the record of its past accomplishment, wisdom and experience will serve that body as a guide to elaborating a pragmatic work programme for 1998.

I would be remiss if I did not commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the imaginative view he took of disarmament matters in his report on reform. We could not agree with him more when he states that disarmament these days

> "is a central issue on the global agenda." [A/51/950, para. 122]

We welcome with particular satisfaction the fact that he recognizes that significant progress in disarmament has been made in recent years, yet does not hesitate to alert the international community to the

> "emergence of new dangers and actors"

in the field of peace and international security. These are real, not imagined, challenges.

In concluding, let me stress my delegation's confidence that under your able leadership, Sir, the First Committee will be able to set the right course for fruitful disarmament endeavours in the days ahead. We trust that this Committee will be able to formulate far-sighted recommendations and provide realistic guidance both to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and to other forums where disarmament concerns are pursued by the international community. For its part, Poland is determined to bring its good will, flexibility and dedication to the search for the ultimate goals of the disarmament efforts.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. We know you have the skill and energy required to lead the Committee through its debate and subsequent adoption of resolutions. You will have our full support.

This has been a year of mixed successes and setbacks for the international community in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. In previous years there were outstanding events to applaud, such as the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the General Assembly's adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) after dedicated and prolonged negotiation.

Characterizing 1997 is more difficult. Our successes, while important, have been less spectacular. This year we have focused on the essential ratification, implementation, institutionalizing, strengthening and locking-in of existing, landmark treaties. There have been significant achievements — the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the start-up of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission, the strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and Convention on Nuclear Safety, the conclusion of negotiations on a convention banning anti-personnel landmines, the United Kingdom's ratification of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty protocols, following that of France in late 1996, the Almaty Declaration on a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, as well as laudable work-in-progress, such as the negotiations to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the first Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 NPT Review Conference.

But there is also a continuing problem which we, the concerned international community, must address without delay. We have, admittedly, spent a great deal of time discussing where in the area of nuclear disarmament we should next turn our attention. Australia, like many others

in this room, cannot but regret the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has struggled throughout the year. In the Conference on Disarmament we cannot afford another lay year like 1997, when there are important issues to address.

Of highest priority to Australia is the need to negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty. The overwhelming majority of delegations represented here committed themselves to commencing its immediate negotiation in the context of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference programme of action — a decision that was confirmed at the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference. In the Conference on Disarmament there is an almost across-the-board willingness to participate in negotiations on a cut-off treaty. In fact, the commencement of negotiations on cut-off has attracted more support than any other issue on the Conference's agenda. That level of agreement is both rare and valuable. The reasons for it are easy to understand.

Cut-off is an important corollary to the completed CTBT, as, among other benefits, it would prohibit the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. It is the next logical step on the path towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. It also, quite frankly, is the issue most ripe for a multilateral nuclear-disarmament negotiation. That is, it is clearly in the province of the Conference, requiring action and obligations from a far broader range of States than the nuclear-weapon States alone. Further, the Conference on Disarmament has an existing consensus on a balanced negotiating mandate for an ad hoc committee that would allow discussion across the full range of issues relating to a cut-off treaty.

Australia remains deeply disappointed that, after years of striving toward the objective of a commencement to negotiations, it appears that the reservations of a fraction of the Conference's membership are bogging the Conference down on this front.

Cut-off has been widely recognized as an important measure in the arms-control expert community. I refer, for example, to the report of the Canberra Commission, which identified cut-off as a valuable and urgent "reinforcing step" towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. The Commission concluded that ending the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would require the dismantlement or placement under international safeguards of all enrichment and reprocessing plants in the nuclear-weapon States and in undeclared weapons States and threshold States. A cut-off treaty therefore has the potential to serve the security interests of all members of the international community: nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, NPT parties and non-NPT parties.

This is surely an outcome for which it is worth putting aside our differences. It would constitute a real and tangible step towards nuclear disarmament and another brick in the wall we must all strive to build against the dangers of proliferation. Australia calls upon other committed delegations to help us prepare the ground for the commencement of negotiations as soon as the Conference resumes in 1998.

There is no doubt that the international community, Governments, the press and non-government organizations have been seized by how best to deal with the appalling human tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines. This pervasive and multidimensional problem has captured the attention of the entire world in recent years.

The Convention recently concluded in Oslo represents a significant development in efforts to ban the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. The Ottawa treaty is one of the gains which have been made to date on anti-personnel landmines, along with the important if partial progress achieved through revised Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), through national and regional measures, and, importantly, through enhanced contributions to demining and mine-victim assistance programmes.

It is the view of Australia that a truly global and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines will be achieved only when major users, producers and exporters are brought in a practical and concrete way into the march towards the goal of a total and comprehensive ban. Australia will continue to pursue this goal in all appropriate forums, including in the Conference on Disarmament and the enhanced CCW review process. We strongly urge all States parties to accept revised Protocol II of the CCW as a matter of priority. Australia did so on 22 August this year.

I can promise that Australia will not be sitting on its hands as we continue to explore the combination of possible approaches which may form the solution to this devastating problem. Australia will continue to respond in an urgent and practical manner to the humanitarian disaster caused by landmines. Since May 1996, Australia has pledged over $19 million (Australian) to regional and international mine-related assistance programmes. This has included demining, development of important new mine-detection technology,

and rehabilitation work. A global ban is essential to stop new mines being laid, but those in a position to help must not forget the 110 million mines already laid.

In preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our efforts must also focus on strengthening nascent and current arms-control regimes. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the negotiations under way to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through the development of an effective verification mechanism. As disturbing events have shown, the BWC was considerably weakened by its lack of an effective verification regime. From the Australian perspective, any violation of the BWC which impacted on our geographical region could have disastrous effects. The very introduction of an insidious weapon of mass destruction would be politically destabilizing. In the event of the use or accidental release of biological weapons, Australia could expect, in addition to the enormous human cost, a devastating effect on agriculture — an important part of the Australian economy and other economies in the South-East Asian region. I know that these concerns are widely shared.

Australia has worked closely with delegations across the geo-political spectrum in the negotiations taking place in the Ad Hoc Group in Geneva, and we note with satisfaction the progress achieved to date. Under the skilled chairmanship of Ambassador Tóth, a quantum step forward has been achieved through the adoption of negotiations based on a rolling text. The negotiation has also attracted the welcome interest and support of non-governmental organizations and academia as well as the vital cooperation of the industrial sectors of many countries.

The successful conclusion of the negotiation of a verification protocol to the BWC would offer the international community enhanced peace and security. Governments of States parties would have increased confidence that they were not unwittingly being implicated in the proliferation of biological weapons. A sound negotiation in which stakeholders' interests are taken properly into account would provide reassurance to key players in our national economies that the practical application of a verification regime would assist rather than intrude. Economic sectors vulnerable to biological weapons, such as agriculture, would profit from greater security. For all these reasons, Australia welcomes the increase in negotiating time being allocated to the BWC Ad Hoc Group in 1998. Australia looks forward to working closely with Ambassador Tóth and delegations to achieve more of the steady and creditable gains made during 1997.

Australia is also pleased at the progress made towards consolidating and rendering more effective other arms control regimes and their associated institutions created by the international community in recent years. Australia welcomed the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and is gratified by the progress it made in its initial year, especially the steps taken to bring vital aspects of the Treaty's verification regime into early operation. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that the Treaty's entry into force at the earliest time must remain a major goal for the international community. To that end, we encourage those States which have signed to take the next step of ratification as early as possible, and we implore those States yet to sign to consider the important contribution to world disarmament they would make in so doing. Australia hopes to be in a position to ratify the CTBT before the next General Assembly.

Australia would also like to add its voice to those of other delegations which have welcomed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The initial declarations made by States parties under article III of the Convention have yielded a practical and tangible security benefit for the international community.

Like others, Australia is working hard to ensure the effective operation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. As with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the reach and effectiveness of the Convention will be closely related to the viability of the institution we have created to support it. In this context, we strongly urge States which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. Russia's international standing and its key role in the implementation of the Convention mean that its early ratification of the Convention is an issue of particularly high priority not only to Australia but to the whole international community.

It has been pleasing to note the successful and constructive start this year to preparations for the sixth Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in the millennium year. The series of decisions which accompanied the indefinite extension, together with the mandates emerging or likely to emerge for the resumed review process is presenting the international community with an exacting agenda. Australia believes that the first Preparatory Committee laid the basis for a qualitatively different and improved treaty review process, one of our principal objectives. We look forward to working with

other supporters of the NPT to building on that basis at the 1998 Preparatory Committee.

With regard to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Australia was one of those countries most engaged in developing the strengthened safeguards model. It is with some pride that I note that Australia was the first Member State to conclude and sign a bilateral protocol with the IAEA incorporating the new measures into our safeguards. But to make the new protocol a living, operational reality, we ask other States also to adopt the protocol as the new standard for safeguards agreements with the IAEA as soon as possible. In that way, the common objective of a strengthened system can be realized.

Turning now to the Conference on Disarmament, it is with considerable frustration that Australia has witnessed the lumbering and convulsive attempts of the Conference on Disarmament to find an appropriate role for itself post-CTBT. To an extent, a period of soul-searching was inevitable after the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations last year. But now the Conference is in urgent need of regeneration. Further prolonged inaction would be corrosive to its standing, relevance and expertise.

The Conference on Disarmament has been the central forum for the two major post-cold-war arms control negotiations: those on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Both negotiations required the geopolitical representativeness, the depth of disarmament understanding, knowledge and memory and the in-house negotiating skill that the Conference on Disarmament uniquely offers. No doubt, arms control and disarmament negotiations can take place anywhere — and indeed have in the past been conducted outside the Conference on Disarmament — but the Conference on Disarmament can provide the global scope to strike the right combination of checks and balances which guarantees the broadest possible participation in and adherence to arms control regimes.

I know that all delegations in the Conference on Disarmament fervently wish to see the work of the Conference make progress next year. Our task therefore is to surmount the differences which stand in the way of the practical and realistic disarmament and non-proliferation achievements which the Conference on Disarmament can deliver.

The question of how to deal with nuclear disarmament was a major cause of the log jam in the Conference on Disarmament this year. Like other countries represented here, Australia is committed to the pursuit, through concrete interlocking steps, of the ultimate objective of global nuclear disarmament. We are not one of those delegations that deny a role for multilateralism in nuclear disarmament. On the contrary, support for the CTBT and for the prospective cut-off negotiations shows that the multilateral disarmament machinery can and must play a role in securing the intermediate reinforcing environment for nuclear disarmament. The final phase of the elimination of nuclear weapons will inevitably be a multilateral endeavour. But we look to the nuclear-weapon States themselves, consistent with their obligations under article VI of the NPT, to reverse the nuclear accumulations of the cold war as a necessary prelude to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The draw-down in cold-war nuclear weapons stockpiles is at last taking place, but we do not see how attempting to prematurely multilateralize this preliminary phase can do anything but complicate and retard progress.

Australia welcomed the agreement reached at Helsinki between President Clinton and President Yeltsin on guidelines for START III. Australia also takes this opportunity to urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II so that countries can move expeditiously forward to further deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals under START III.

Australia has been grateful for the many positive comments passed to its representatives and made in public debate throughout the year on the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. It is a source of satisfaction to the Australian Government that the report has been a tool to stimulate positive discussion on the feasibility of nuclear disarmament and on the steps required to get there.

While I am on the subject of international disarmament debate, this is an appropriate opportunity to express Australia's support for the work being done through United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, notably the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu. We agree with the Secretary-General's recent assessment that the Centre's mandate remains valid and that it can and, we believe, does play an important role in promoting informed debate and a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the Asia-Pacific region in the post-cold-war era. Australia was

pleased to be able to participate this year in a Kathmandu seminar on the CTBT.

We also commend the Government of Japan and concerned Japanese organizations for their assiduous sponsorship of debate in our region on non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

Australia has welcomed and supported the progressive and far-reaching efforts of the Secretary-General in his approach to United Nations reform. In principle we endorse Mr. Annan's intention to strengthen the Centre for Disarmament to work with the arms control community towards better implementation of existing instruments and towards promoting universal adherence to them. We are confident that the diplomacy and good offices of the Secretary-General will be able to complement, without duplicating, the functions of existing treaty bodies and associated institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the CTBT Organization and the enhanced NPT review process.

We also support the Secretary-General's proposal for considering some updating, rationalization and streamlining of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. While Australia values the opportunity offered by both those bodies for exchanges of views and exploration of the issues confronting us, we urge a continuous effort towards tightly focused and outcome-oriented exchanges. Why say the same thing twice on two different occasions when once would do? Why produce conclusions and recommendations which a body of similar competence and identical membership has concluded and recommended already? Given the urgent, concrete and practical arms control measures which need to be adopted and implemented, we frankly do not have the luxury or the resources to indulge in exercises of that kind.

In this context, we also question the utility of the First Committee's structured debate which, regrettably, has evolved into a rehashing of general statements rather than a constructive discussion of particular proposals. It is for this reason that Australia will resist as best it can participation in this year's structured debate, and will devote its energies instead to the negotiation and refinement of our product: the draft resolutions we will adopt.

We would also prefer to see a diminution in the number of draft resolutions submitted in the First Committee each year, through a conscientious effort to biennialize draft resolutions which are important but not urgent, to merge draft resolutions dealing with similar subjects and to reduce the number of routine requests for reports from the Secretary-General, some of which are of questionable utility. This would give the Committee more time for serious negotiations to try to overcome the philosophical differences that hamper the international work of disarmament and non-proliferation, and would also free up Secretariat resources for more productive work.

Australia is looking forward to a constructive and useful session of the First Committee that will leave behind the divisive rhetoric of the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament, allowing us instead to seriously consider and debate the issues which warrant our attention in 1998. It is imperative that we now roll up our sleeves and get down to work.

The Chairman: I call on the observer for the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): The Holy See joins in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We also extend our best wishes to the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election.

As the world approaches the millennium, many people and organizations are already casting their eyes towards the opening years of the twenty-first century. Will the next century be a time of peace, the fruit of the blossoming of human intelligence and human love? We can draw a measure of hope that peace will be our accomplishment in the years ahead from the achievements of the past few years: the ending of the cold war; reductions in military forces in Europe; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; reductions in nuclear weapons by the two foremost nuclear-weapon States; the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. These achievements are steps that have moved the world closer to peace, and the First Committee has played a role in that success.

But can we say that the course to peace is clear? Unfortunately, we cannot. Every day, conflict and violence still produce victims. Genocide, the slaughter of innocents, and attacks on vulnerable populations continue to scar the landscape. The arms trade, particularly in conventional

weapons, only adds to the bloodshed in many warring countries.

Indeed, in recent conflicts more people have been killed by short-range small weapons than by weapons of mass destruction. The tragedy of this trend is that more human beings, including children, are forced to wage war. In addition, these wars are often prolonged by the use of short-range small weapons. Most developing countries where conflict situations exist are abundantly supplied with such weapons. In spite of this fact, weapons of mass destruction are still produced in great quantity. Nuclear weapons, aptly described as "the ultimate evil", are still possessed by the most powerful States, which refuse to let go of them.

These searing facts of militarism remind us how far the world still has to go to claim universal peace. The world is paying a high price for the "culture of war" that has characterized the twentieth century. Even now, nearly a decade after the end of the cold war, the world's Governments spend more than $800 billion a year to support military forces of more than 27 million soldiers. While this is a decline in spending since the cold war high in 1987, most of the decline has come from the sharp drop in spending by the former Warsaw Pact nations. Despite the end of the cold war, developed nations, other than the East European countries, spend only 10 per cent less than they did in 1987. Military expenditures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries are now more than 10 times the expenditures of the former Warsaw Pact countries. Not only are the developed countries big military spenders, but they are also responsible for 90 per cent of the $22 billion annual arms trade. The dangerous global proliferation of arms and weapons technology has contributed to inciting and prolonging armed conflicts raging in different locations around the world.

For their part, the developing countries currently spend $221 billion on armed forces. This spending is a considerable drain on these nations' already limited resources. New weapons procurement and larger armies mean fewer funds to invest in health, education, economic development and other urgent social needs of large and vulnerable populations. Some 1.3 billion people are so poor that they cannot meet their basic needs for food and shelter. Sixty percent of humanity lives on less than $2 a day. Despite some remarkable successes in human development in some fast-growing economies, more than 100 countries are worse off today than they were 15 years ago. Each year between 13 and 18 million people, most of them children, die from hunger and poverty-related causes.

Sustainable development needs huge amounts of investment in scientific research, technological development, education and training, infrastructure development and the transfer of technology. Investment in these structural advances is urgently needed to stop carbon dioxide poisoning of the atmosphere and the depletion of the earth's biological resources such as the forests, wetlands and animal species now under attack.

As the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) put it, it is clear that "we cannot simultaneously pay the price of war and the price of peace". Budgetary priorities need to be realigned in order to direct financial resources to enhancing life, not producing death. A transformation of political attitudes is needed to build a culture of peace. A new political attitude would say "no" to investment in arms and destruction and "yes" to investment in the construction of peace. The relationship between disarmament and development, given short shrift by Governments since the United Nations Conference for the Promotion of International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in 1987, must be emphasized anew. In that relationship, a process of disarmament providing security at progressively lower levels of armaments could allow more resources to be devoted to development; correspondingly, the development process enhances security and can promote disarmament.

Such an approach to human security by Governments would lead to the fulfilment of the right to peace, which every person in every culture can claim. No less a goal than the right to live in peace will suffice for the new millennium.

The international community, once awakened, has shown that it can indeed move to strengthen human security. The work fostered by the Ottawa process in producing a treaty banning the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines reflects the strengths of compassion and political action. The Holy See commends this initiative and urges universal support for the treaty. Pope John Paul II has appealed for the definitive cessation of the manufacture and use of these insidious arms, which strike cruelly and indiscriminately at civilian populations. Signing the new treaty will not be enough, however. Equal attention should be given to the detection and removal of the 100 million deployed landmines that continue to kill and maim 26,000 innocent people every year. More resources should be devoted to demining efforts.

If biological weapons, chemical weapons, and now landmines can be eliminated, so too can nuclear weapons. No weapons so threaten the longed-for peace of the twenty-first century as do nuclear arms. Let not the immensity of this task dissuade us from the efforts needed to free humanity from such a scourge. With the valuable admonition offered in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the international community can now see how the legal and moral arguments against nuclear weapons intertwine with the strategic: since nuclear weapons can destroy all life on the planet, they imperil all that humanity has ever stood for — and indeed, humanity itself. During the acrimonious years of the cold war, with the emphasis on the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence as a constant justification for the nuclear arms build-up, the international community felt powerless to stop the relentless build-up of nuclear weapons. But now, in the post-cold war era characterized by new partnerships, the international community cannot shield itself from the assault on life itself that nuclear weapons represent. The work that this Committee has done in calling for negotiations leading to a nuclear weapons convention must be stepped up. Those nuclear-weapon States resisting such negotiations must be challenged, for in clinging to their outmoded rationales for nuclear deterrence they are denying the most ardent aspirations of humanity as well as the opinion of the highest legal authority in the world. The gravest consequences for humankind lie ahead if the world is to be ruled by the militarism which nuclear weapons represent rather than by the humanitarian law espoused by the International Court of Justice.

Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the twenty-first century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition.

The Holy See has previously stated in this Committee:

> "The world must move to the abolition of nuclear weapons through a universal, non-discriminatory ban, with intensive inspection by a universal authority." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, First Committee*, 20th meeting]

Today we repeat those words, conscious that there is a gathering momentum of world opinion in support of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge and a political challenge. That multiple-based challenge must be met by the application of our humanity.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me, Sir, to join those who have congratulated you on your election to the responsible position of Chairman of the First Committee, and to express my conviction that, under your guidance, the First Committee will take the best possible decisions on the broad range of issues relating to disarmament and international security on its agenda.

The report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the work of the Organization states:

> "In the past 12 months, significant progress in arms regulation and disarmament has been achieved through multilateral treaty-making, in several cases through the Conference on Disarmament." [A/52/1, para. 90]

This accomplishment is, without doubt, the result of all of the efforts of the international community to achieve a nuclear-free world and to strengthen international security.

Kazakhstan attaches the greatest importance to the decisions and resolutions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and supports efforts to encourage full compliance with and the effective implementation of that Treaty. As a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, our country is firmly committed to the non-proliferation regime, and believes it necessary actively to contribute to its further strengthening. We note with satisfaction the beginning of a new review process for the Treaty, and hope that the first session of the Preparatory Committee, which took place in April this year, and further steps leading to the Review Conference in the year 2000, will help to ensure that the Non-Proliferation Treaty will be universal in nature. We believe that there is a need to revitalize efforts to establish legally binding international instruments so as to provide the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty with safeguards against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

The Republic of Kazakhstan firmly supports the goals of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the signing of this document was one of the most important historic events of the century. Adherence to this Treaty by the overwhelming majority of Member States has been a qualitatively new step in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon all States to join in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the time has come for strict compliance with the Treaty

and that a global monitoring system should be established and introduced as soon as possible.

Our country has felt the full force of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear tests over a period of more than 40 years at the Semipalatinsk test site — the largest such area in the world — over 470 nuclear explosions took place, or some 70 per cent of all the nuclear tests conducted in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Enormous harm has been done to the health of the people and to the environment of Kazakhstan. The decision of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, to close the Semipalatinsk testing ground should be seen as a major contribution to nuclear disarmament and an act of historical significance. In September this year, half a century after the Semipalatinsk testing ground began operations, an International Conference on Problems of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons took place in Almaty and Kurchatov at the initiative of our Head of State. Addressing the participants, the President of Kazakhstan stated:

> "Since achieving independence, our country has made its views on nuclear weapons absolutely clear. While we had them on our territory we never attempted to use the situation for any political purposes. The clear and firm position of Kazakhstan has been reasserted through a number of concrete actions. All nuclear warheads have been withdrawn from our Republic. We have become a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The nuclear-weapon States have given Kazakhstan comprehensive guarantees for its safety and territorial integrity."

Many countries participated in the Conference, as did the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international organizations. The Conference discussed political and technical issues pertaining to the non-proliferation regime and the problems of converting former test sites and their infrastructures. Issues relating to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia were also examined. The problems of radiation safety and the rehabilitation of land formerly used as a test site were a further topic of discussion.

In a message to participants at the Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, emphasized:

> "This Conference is one of a number of important steps towards a nuclear-free world ... The world community knows that nuclear tests have caused an extended area of Kazakhstan to be affected by nuclear radiation with significant deterioration of the environment. This problem requires international attention. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons ... are important items on the agenda of the international community."

The final Declaration of the Conference states:

> "The Conference gave experts with different approaches to solving proliferation problems the opportunity to exchange their views, to share experience of different countries and organizations directed to strengthening the non-proliferation regime ... The participants hope that the Conference contributed significantly to the understanding of the problems related to strengthening non-proliferation and hope that progress was achieved in mutual understanding between the participating countries."

The strengthening of ecological security is an extremely important issue for the Central Asian region. Accordingly, at a meeting in Almaty in February of this year, the Heads of the Central Asian States adopted a declaration proclaiming 1998 a Year of Environmental Protection in our region, and stating the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia that other regions can join. We are grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his support for the idea of establishing such a zone, as expressed in his address to the participants of the Conference in Kazakhstan.

Further implementation of the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and its significance for strengthening regional security were discussed at the International Conference in Tashkent held from 14 to 16 September this year.

The history of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has shown that they can be a really effective factor in reducing tensions and establishing proper conditions for development in a region. At the same time, we understand that, taking into account the difficulty of establishing our nuclear-weapon-free zone, we need a detailed and careful study of all related questions. Therefore, Kazakhstan considers that there is a need for gradual, consistent work in this area.

The Republic of Kazakhstan actively supports the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to

strengthen the system of guarantees. Facilities in Kazakhstan which come under the guarantees have begun to implement the measures under Part 1 of the 93 + 2 Programme. In our Republic we have developed and now operate a State system for inventory and control of nuclear materials. All the activities of Kazakhstan in the area of verification of nuclear materials are regulated by a national law on export control and a recently enacted law on the use of atomic energy.

Kazakhstan continues to believe that there is a need to conclude a convention to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

We have adopted a decision to establish a national body to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). We are considering the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to ensure full participation of Kazakhstan in the non-proliferation regime for chemical weapons.

Recognizing the key role of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 26 May 1972 within the structure of current arms control Treaties, and its significance for reducing strategic offensive weapons, Kazakhstan has stated that it will adhere to the Treaty and take part in negotiations in the Standing Consultative Commission to adapt it to new political realities and to provide agreements to limit strategic and non-strategic anti-ballistic missiles. A result of the Commission's productive work was the signing on 25 September this year in New York by the Foreign Ministers of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the United States and Ukraine of four related documents on a multilateral format for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which will allow us to resolve a number of important security issues. These agreements will play a positive role in cooperation between the parties in the area of security. These documents are fully in keeping with the strategic interests of Kazakhstan, which is unswervingly trying to make its contribution to strengthening regional and global security and stability.

We recognize the enormous importance of reducing conventional weapons, particularly those which have excessively injurious or indiscriminate effects, and on 6 August this year our Government adopted a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines, including their re-export and transport. This represents an important contribution by Kazakhstan to the efforts of the international community to limit the use of anti-personnel landmines and access to them and eventually to ban their use completely.

Continuing armed conflicts in various regions of the world with the use of conventional weapons makes ever more urgent the establishment of effective control over the spread of such weapons. While we support international efforts to settle regional conflicts, the Republic of Kazakhstan is making its own contribution to steps to improve machinery to control conventional weapons, and had submitted the necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since 1992.

Kazakhstan, like other States, has expressed an interest in active participation in the work of multilateral disarmament machinery, first and foremost in the Conference on Disarmament. In this connection, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should, as soon as possible, consider the inclusion of new members on the basis of political and geographical balance, also taking into account the contribution of each candidate country to the disarmament process.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has been consistently working to strengthen security and stability at the regional level. Our country notes with satisfaction the growing understanding of the initiative put forward by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nazarbaev, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to convene a conference on security and confidence-building measures in Asia. On 5 November we plan to hold in Almaty another regular meeting of participants at Deputy Foreign Minister level. Representatives of more than 20 Asian States and of international organizations will take part. I should like to take this opportunity once again to express gratitude to the United Nations for supporting this initiative of the President of Kazakhstan.

A major achievement in international security is, we feel the signing of agreements between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China on confidence-building measures and measures to reduce armed forces in border areas.

Items put forward for discussion in the First Committee are of exceptional importance for the world community. We believe that decisions taken here should promote, to the maximum extent, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and ensure peace and security at the regional and global levels. The delegation of

Kazakhstan is prepared to continue constructive cooperation with delegations of Member States in order to achieve these noble goals.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): On behalf of the Croatian delegation, allow me, Sir, to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of your important position. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you. We are convinced that with your guidance the work of the First Committee will move along its desired course and conclude successfully.

Multilateral treaties and their verifying mechanisms represent the basis for the achievement of our disarmament goals and objectives, including the strengthening of international peace and security and social and economic development. In this respect, the United Nations faces an increasing work load. Some efforts are successful, others are not. While constructive progress in some fields of disarmament has been achieved over the past 12 months, progress in others is slower, sometimes even deadlocked, as this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has shown.

On a bright note, the Chemical Weapons Convention came into force on 29 April 1997 and has now been ratified by almost a hundred States. The 1997 Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) added the necessary momentum to the process of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation. The drive for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines has been accelerated through the Ottawa process, and a comprehensive Convention will be open for signature in December.

Of all the disarmament issues on our agenda, nuclear non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons is the most important issue of the day. A combination of bilateral and multilateral efforts has enabled us to enter a new phase in the process, as the adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has shown. But there are still many important issues on this agenda.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 has been followed up by some positive action during this year's Preparatory Committee, which includes the adoption, in June this year, of strengthened safeguards. My delegation was especially pleased to see strong support for the reaffirmation of the universality of the NPT, and calls for its full implementation in all its aspects. Croatia strongly believes that the NPT offers the only true universal mechanism to curb nuclear proliferation, which represents movement towards the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

We are concerned about the fact that some threshold States continue to refuse to commit themselves to nuclear non-proliferation, especially in the light of the latest initiatives by some nuclear Powers to accelerate the nuclear disarmament process. On the other hand, considering the efforts many non-nuclear States have made to turn their regions into nuclear-weapon-free zones, and taking into consideration the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use by a State of nuclear weapons in armed conflict, my delegation believes that a binding document on non-first use would significantly contribute to the disarmament process.

Croatia also supports early negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as one of the next steps in the nuclear disarmament measures identified in the 1995 principles and objectives programme of action. My delegation believes that the momentum created over recent years with regard to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament should not be held hostage to unrealized, and in some cases unrealistic, demands and that the best way to further the cause of nuclear non-proliferation is to proceed one step at a time. In this respect, Croatia would like to see these efforts bring concrete positive results, so that the momentum for nuclear non-proliferation can be sustained.

The Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April 1997. My delegation would like once again to express its satisfaction over the enthusiasm with which many States have embraced this Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Croatia acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993, and the Croatian Parliament ratified it in March 1995.

Croatia, one of the original States parties to the Convention, has never possessed nor planned to possess or produce chemical weapons. Croatia has taken further steps to ensure that the Chemical Weapons Convention will be fully implemented on its territory, by establishing a Government commission as a focal point for coordination with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as with other Member States. Recently, my delegation showed its support for the Organization by co-sponsoring resolution 51/230 on cooperation between the

United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Croatia is carefully following the work of the Ad Hoc Group aimed at strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. My delegation welcomes and supports the efforts of the Ad Hoc Group, and is especially eager to see a successful end to the drafting of a legally binding verification regime which would take into account the interests of all countries. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the proposal put forward by the Netherlands in the Ad Hoc Group concerning the establishment of a specialized verification regime modelled on the CTBT and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and would welcome the adoption of such a regime in 1998.

In May 1996 the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons amended Protocol II on landmines. This was surely a significant step, but one that did not fulfil all expectations. Given the seriousness with which many States have approached the problem of drafting a comprehensive treaty banning the production as well as the transfer, stockpiling and use of landmines, my delegation has extended, and will continue to extend, its full support to the Ottawa process.

Croatia welcomes the recent decision of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on antipersonnel landmines to adopt the text of the global treaty banning this weapon, a treaty which Croatia expects to sign at the earliest opportunity. Croatia has played an active role in this process from the beginning, and has reinforced its commitment by placing its own unilateral moratoria on the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia regrets the fact that some of the largest users and producers of landmines have not fully or at all engaged in this process. My delegation regrets that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to make any significant progress in this regard. Complementary efforts on the part of the Conference on Disarmament would certainly have strengthened the Ottawa process, making it much more difficult for States to justify using and producing anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia's emphasis on and concern with the global landmine problem has been deepened by its tragic war experience. The hundreds and thousands of mines laid in our former occupied territories continue to be the direct cause of many tragedies, especially among civilians. The demining of these areas is a difficult process, which, despite our best efforts, will take many years. Presently, the Croatian Government Commission on Demining is engaged in a number of demining projects throughout the country, while in the near future Croatia will be establishing a Mine Action Centre to take over the responsibilities of the United Nations Mine Action Centre. Moreover, demining experts in Croatia are working on a detailed survey to determine the best course for further action. Unfortunately, a lack of trained personnel and specialized equipment means that the process cannot move faster.

Nevertheless, my delegation would like to reiterate the words of our Foreign Minister in expressing Croatia's gratitude to all those who have thus far provided financial and other aid towards alleviating the landmine problem in Croatia, as well as to make a further appeal for aid — material, financial or professional — which can help us expedite the demining process. Also, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Zagreb and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs in helping launch this programme.

Bilateral agreements and regional associations, like the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, are increasingly engaged in promoting peace and stability, as well as trying to prevent conflicts between or within States in their regions.

I should like to stress that Croatia takes its regional and local disarmament commitments very seriously. Croatia has already fulfilled its obligations under Annex 1-B of Article IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement on sub-regional arms control, and Croatia regularly fulfils its obligations in regard to Vienna Document-94 on reporting to the OSCE on military holdings. Croatia has also fulfilled its requirements pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 51/38, on standardized reporting of military expenditure, and 51/45 H, on transparency in armaments, by submitting its national reports in September 1997. In addition, the process of transforming and modernizing Croatia's armed forces to North Atlantic Treaty Organization standards is proceeding steadily, but is limited by its present financial constraints. Hopefully, this process will be completed by the end of the decade.

On the local level, as part of the confidence-building measures in the concluding stages of the peaceful

reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium into the rest of country, Croatia has been approached to consider the possibility of establishing a permanent demilitarized zone along this border region with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

My Government has on a number of occasions openly stated that it shall favour such an approach but that, for any successful demilitarization of the border region between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to occur, it is necessary that similar action be taken by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This action on the part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has not been forthcoming and, as a result, negotiations on the possible demilitarization of this region have not proceeded further.

In closing, my delegation should like to address the question of membership in the Conference on Disarmament. Croatia welcomes the recent debate in the Conference with regard to its further expansion, including the appointment of Ambassador Harald Kreid of Austria as Special Coordinator for that purpose. My delegation believes that the Conference on Disarmament, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, should respect the wishes of all prospective new members and therefore shares the opinion already expressed by many States members of the Conference that further expansion of its membership will serve only to add to its wealth of experience and expertise and will in no way negatively affect its programme of work. The process of expansion should proceed in a comprehensive manner, accepting without prejudice all new prospective members.

In this regard, my delegation regrets that paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 51/47 A, which calls on the Conference on Disarmament to consider all remaining applications for membership with a view to reaching a decision on its further enlargement before the end of its 1997 session, has not been fulfilled. In the same light, my delegation should like to express its appreciation to all those delegations which have supported this non-discriminatory approach on expansion of the Conference. Croatia hopes that this position will prevail and that it will be given the opportunity to make its contribution to the Conference on Disarmament as a full member in the near future.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay congratulates you, Sir, on your election to lead the work of the First Committee. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and support in your important tasks.

I wish to point out that, without prejudice to the statements that are made jointly with the Rio Group and others that will be made in the structured debate on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market, my delegation wishes to make some comments on disarmament and international security.

At the last session of the General Assembly, we were pleased to note the progress achieved in the field of nuclear disarmament — the details of which are broadly known — that began with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, of which Uruguay was one of the first signatories.

In February this year in Mexico City, we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which marked a historical landmark as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world. Latin America and the Caribbean proudly hold up this Treaty as proof of the need to liberate the international community from the dangers of the existence of nuclear weapons. It reminds us of the urgent need to eliminate these weapons, which have been and continue to be a threat to mankind for more than half a century.

After endlessly protested delays, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction was acceded to by the United States. This is one of the contributions that we are very pleased to highlight. Other States, regrettably, have yet to sign it and we urge them to decide themselves soon in this regard. The implementation of some aspects of full compliance with the Convention also remains of concern to my Government.

Unfortunately, palpable progress has not yet been achieved in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The appeal of the international community for a comprehensive approach covering the horizontal, vertical and qualitative dimensions continues to go unheeded because of the voracity of producers and traders.

We cannot believe that the nuclear Powers are resigned to the fact that the world nuclear arsenal will not be completely eliminated from the face of the Earth until the year 2025. This is not very encouraging. We agree with those pacifists who maintain that, while the twentieth century saw the birth of nuclear weapons, the twenty-first will see their complete destruction. It is more than unfortunate to note that resources continue to be diverted from and not channelled into the development projects that humanity so sorely needs. We have not yet been able to

eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust and my country therefore remains committed to the complete and definitive destruction of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, Uruguay considers the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic to be an area for active cooperation and a link between the countries of the zone in the use of the oceans and the exploitation of their resources within the ambit of United Nations conventions on this issue. We therefore insist on the denuclearization of the South Atlantic. We believe that harmonizing the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok provide the legal variety to pave the way to achieving this aspiration.

At the regional level, we are concerned by the recent decision of the Government of the United States to lift the ban on the sale of weapons to Latin America. Of course, we are also aware of sales agreed upon with other manufacturing countries. Nonetheless, in the unipolar world in which we are living, a decision of the United Nations has a meaning that transcends the merely commercial. Latin America is enjoying a special historical moment of peace and stability and we firmly hope that we will not be affected by this fact.

The President of Uruguay, Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, reminded us recently that weapons have their own momentum. He also expressed his deep trust, however, that the measure adopted will only serve to ensure that the resale of arms merely make the necessary minimum upgrade of equipment to guarantee the maintenance of equilibrium in the region.

John Kenneth Galbraith also wrote in the United Nations publication *Disarmament: A Periodic Review*:

> "With weapons coming from prosperous countries, millions of people from the poor countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been openly massacred or have died as a result of economic devastation, which is the terribly painful counterpart to civilian disputes and conflicts." ["The Autonomous Military Power: An Economic View". *Disarmament: A Periodic Review*, v.19:3, 1996, pp. 42-43]

We have also noted with concern the global commercial expansion of the transport of dangerous materials and how this can affect the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given country. In this regard, the Senate of Uruguay recently adopted legislation banning the passage of any kind of dangerous waste, in any form or under any regime, through areas under our national jurisdiction. This will serve to avoid any future accident involving such material.

As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, leaving the cold war behind, important progress has been achieved in reducing tensions, but we must not be satisfied merely with that. We have a duty to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The United Nations, which is in the throes of reform, is facing a challenge in the area of disarmament and international security that it must meet. Once intra-State conflicts have been settled, the Organization must collect the weapons of the warring parties. In order to keep control over the weapons, we will have to guarantee that they are destroyed and prevent them from falling into other hands.

The persistent and worsening problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons used in a wide range of activities, from inter-State aggression to criminal acts, must be dealt with decisively. This proliferation is related to, *inter alia*, drug trafficking, internal disturbances, organized crime and mercenary groups, for which the transborder, clandestine trade in arms is a dangerous ally that we must combat in all its forms. This is where the United Nations is facing one of its greatest challenges.

Organized transnational crime is yet another component of this deadly threat still hanging heavily over humankind, which jeopardizes the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of this planet. The task facing the Organization is not easy, but it is not impossible. The fact that we are a troop-contributing country in United Nations peacekeeping operations means that we are a constant collaborator in these efforts, which are becoming increasingly demanding.

We have committed ourselves to all the initiatives to bring about general and complete disarmament, such as "micro-disarmament", which includes the culmination of the Ottawa process leading to the Convention for the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We will also support the initiative to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, so that, with a precise agenda covering unavoidable issues, we may face the future of international disarmament with determination.

My delegation will join in the efforts to simplify and rationalize the procedures of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. Their agendas must be reformed so that our work reaches a level of efficiency equal to the challenges before us.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I wish to express, Sir, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the leadership of this important Committee. We welcome your comprehensive statement at the start of our debate. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

At the outset, let me underline that the vocation of the First Committee consists of disarmament and international security. Evidently, the focus is on the military threats to peace and security. Today's world inherits the realities of the cold war. As the Secretary-General noted in his report on reform of the Organization [A/51/950], the cessation of super-Power rivalry and military confrontation set in train a whole host of progressive changes within and among nations. The collapse of bipolarity has also resulted in uncertainties, strategic gaps and a new polarization, which have created a new arms race.

The military threats to security, both within and among nations, cannot be under-estimated, although some progress has been made in recent years in the field of arms control and disarmament. Progress in the field of weapons of mass destruction has been significant. The ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention was a historic achievement for the international community. We have celebrated the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and witnessed its signature by 147 countries. Confidence-building measures in different regions of the world attest to the optimistic view that reason can prevail over confrontation; that given the political will, regional disarmament can begin without waiting for global disarmament; that the vision of a brave new world can be translated into reality if the peoples of the United Nations work with unity of purpose.

But, unfortunately, the international community is yet to achieve results that would allow complacency, for the accomplishments we have listed are all critically imperfect in each of the domains -- atomic, biological, chemical and conventional.

The cap on nuclear proliferation remains uncertain on several counts. There are suggestions that the number of threshold States could rise. While only five countries remain outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the CTBT has been seriously undermined. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by sub-critical tests. Great optimism has been attached to the nuclear-weapon-free zones. But experience has shown that there is a limit to that exercise. The Treaty of Bangkok, without the endorsement of the nuclear five, bears witness to that. The negative security assurances are perceived as seriously flawed. A nuclear-free southern hemisphere is blocked, as the north maintains the nuclear arsenal. In some regions, denuclearization or nuclear-free-zone efforts, it is argued, impinge on global disarmament.

Nuclear arms control has proved elusive. A fissile material cut-off treaty seems as intractable as the CTBT appeared in the last decades. The Conference on Disarmament has been able to make little substantive progress in this field, as in other areas covered by its "Decalogue" over the past year. It has not even been able to set up an ad hoc committee to negotiate a fissile material ban or to agree on the very scope of negotiations. Arguments go back and forth on the elimination of nuclear weapons, from the NPT through the CTBT and the fissile materials cut-off treaty. It is evident that there is no credible way out of the impasse except global nuclear disarmament.

At the last session, the Bangladesh delegation joined others in recalling the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the *Legality of the Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons*.

Let me recall that the Court decided unanimously that any threat or use of force involving nuclear weapons was unlawful if it violated Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter, which calls on nations to refrain from the threat or use of force, and if it failed to meet "all the requirements" of Article 51 on the right of self-defence. The use of nuclear weapons, the Court said, would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and, in particular, the principles and rules of humanitarian law. Let us also draw attention to the oft-quoted unanimous verdict of the Court that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

Let there be no misunderstanding that when we refer to the conclusions of the Canberra Commission that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all States, and hence quote the Court's Advisory Opinion, we are not attempting to turn the opinion of the Court into a legal edict. In doing so,

we are simply reminding NPT signatories of their obligations with regard to nuclear disarmament. In repeating it, we are urging all concerned to take cognizance of the experts' views and of the threats to mankind's very existence. We are encouraged by the European Parliament's resolution of 13 March 1997 calling on members to support the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to the conclusion of a convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The group of 21 non-aligned members of the Conference on Disarmament has submitted a programme of action for phased elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of 2020. That proposal is not only realistic but expedient. On this point the ICJ, the Canberra Commission and the European Parliament, as well as various think-tanks and professionals, converge. Differences about the appropriate forum exist. That does not justify inaction. Let this Committee embark on resolving the question of the forum; let it hear the divergent views; let us work together for consensus. It will be a historical aberration if we do not act on such a grave matter in time. The question may be raised: what then prevents the politicians and the diplomats from undertaking negotiations? Whither the vision of the brave new world!

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has, happily, entered into force. But adherence to it has yet to become universal; a lack of financial resources for destruction of stockpiles is preventing ratification by the country with the largest amount of chemical weapons.

There has been encouraging progress in strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The Review Conference had called on the Ad Hoc Group to intensify its work with a view to completing it as soon as possible before the commencement of the fifth review conference in 2001. We hope the Ad Hoc Group will be able to finalize the verification protocol in time.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms remains limited, with about half the United Nations membership, including some of the major importers, not providing any data. There are deficiencies in reporting and accounting procedures. Questions and differences remain on the expansion of the Register's scope to cover other conventional weapons, to make the designation of weapons more specific, to encompass domestic procurement and to define transfer. Nevertheless, we commend the work of the Group of Governmental Experts.

The open sale of small arms is of mounting concern to my delegation. As the Secretary-General has reported, in at least 15 conflicts the primary instruments of violence are small arms. The irony is that there is intense competition to export these weapons, including to the conflict areas in which the United Nations is struggling to promote peace. The work of the Group of Governmental Experts, in this perspective, is of particular importance. Our task will be to consider their recommendations and provide for the necessary mechanisms to prevent proliferation of these weapons.

The question of anti-personnel landmines has undoubtedly been on top of the list of disarmament issues over the last year. The fact that about a hundred States have approved an international treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines, for signature in Ottawa in December 1997, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its Coordinator, Ms. Jody Williams, shows that world opinion favours elimination of landmines from the face of the Earth. We welcome this positive development. However, the decision by some major Powers not to sign the agreement renders it virtually ineffective. We support a comprehensive global treaty that will encourage States to give up the option of anti-personnel mines as a means of defence. Although it is lagging behind the Ottawa process, the Conference on Disarmament has appointed a Special Coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines, under its agenda item on a comprehensive programme of disarmament. We hope that, while working on the issue of landmines, the Conference on Disarmament will pay due regard to the need of affected States, most of which are developing countries, for technological and financial help in the massive and challenging task of mine clearance.

It is satisfying to note that, after intensive negotiations, the Disarmament Commission has generally agreed on convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. Since the third special session on disarmament nine years ago there have been fundamental changes in the international security situation. The fourth special session should keep nuclear disarmament as a priority item on its agenda. In this age of transparency and democracy, it is time that world leaders met in a special session in the spirit of multilateralism, took stock of the changes that have taken place over the years and found a bold and concrete path towards disarmament. We hope that the Disarmament

Commission will be able to finalize the time, objectives and agenda of the fourth special session at its 1998 session.

We appreciate the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in promoting dialogue on disarmament at a regional and subregional level; this has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". We hope the Centre will continue to receive the consideration of those whose gracious contributions have helped it to continue.

We see disarmament as an instrument for enhancing international security. The reduction of military threats to security is a must for addressing non-military threats to security, because that is essential for reallocating resources from armaments to development. Disarmament should also be pursued with a special focus on restraint of supplies, and should aim at reducing the underlying political causes of proliferation. All of us share the burden, but some of us certainly have greater powers and responsibilities.

Before concluding, I should like to say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation of disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the depths of poverty and underdevelopment. The cold war has ended, but the peace dividend has yet to reach developing countries. The savings resulting from a small cut in military expenditure by the major Powers might contribute substantially to financing development in the developing world. Disarmament is an attribute of a higher level of civilization, which can be sustained only through ensuring at least a minimum level of development for all. If humankind wants to attain a true level of civilization, it is not enough to refrain from hurting one another; we have to make every endeavour to help others live a life of human dignity.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): Please accept my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-second session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and your colleagues lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

At last year's session of the First Committee, my Ambassador concluded his statement in the general debate by saying that 1996 had been a successful year for disarmament and non-proliferation on many fronts, and he cited the achievements of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the successful Conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the progress that had been made in increasing the areas of the globe covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones, the work that was being done to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as examples of the work which had been accomplished. He went on to say, however, that there was much that still needed to be done to achieve our common goals of the elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction and to end the human tragedy and suffering that is being caused by the proliferation of conventional weapons, and that our work here at the First Committee must therefore be focused on ensuring that we maintain the momentum of our accomplishments.

Looking over the events of the past year, South Africa is not in a position to give such a glowing account. The attitude which we are able to take can at best be described as ambivalent. While 1997 has shown us several accomplishments in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, there were as many disappointments and failures to grasp the opportunities which were available.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to agree on the work which should be done during its 1997 session, despite some last-minute papering over the cracks, was symptomatic of the problems which have been faced. Since the end of the cold war, the Conference on Disarmament has shown itself capable of directing its energies to the negotiation and conclusion of major disarmament and non-proliferation agreements which benefit the peace and security of the entire international community. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were major accomplishments, and as a relatively new member of the Conference on Disarmament South Africa had hoped and expected that that body, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, would go on to do more of the same.

The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament can be ascribed to several factors. The most important of these, in our view, was the inability of many of its members to look beyond the issues which divided them. Instead of showing flexibility and seeking to find compromises, members adopted intractable positions, insisting on the inclusion of specific national and group positions before any programme of work could be agreed upon. At the heart of the problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament was the question of how to address nuclear disarmament and the negotiation of a treaty on the prohibition of the production

of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

To a lesser extent the anti-personnel landmine issue was also a source of much of the debate in the Conference on Disarmament this year. The conclusion in Oslo of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction should, however, have the result of defusing the debate in the Conference on Disarmament and making it possible to consider a more realistic agenda there for this issue.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to reach a consensus on a mechanism which would allow for substantive work on the nuclear disarmament issue can be seen as a result of two opposing views. On the one side, there is a refusal to acknowledge the multilateral dimension of nuclear disarmament, and we have heard concerns expressed about this being the start of a slippery slope and that it would deny the bilateral and plurilateral dimensions of nuclear disarmament. On the other side of the debate, there are those who would seek to impose ideological concepts on and linkages between the various elements of nuclear disarmament. The 1997 impasse should make it clear that the solution for the Conference on Disarmament does not lie down either of these routes. As South Africa's Foreign Minister stated during the general debate at this year's session of the General Assembly,

> "the re-emergence of maximalist positions in the disarmament debate retards global disarmament" [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 6th meeting, p. 15].

The time has come for the States trapped between these two extremes to mobilize their strength and to set an agenda for 1998 which would exert the required pressure for the Conference on Disarmament not only to consider nuclear disarmament as a whole but also, as has previously been agreed, finally to commence the negotiations on the cut-off treaty on the basis of the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein.

Nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. Substantive work in an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament of the Conference on Disarmament would not, and should not, undermine or threaten the nuclear disarmament negotiations between Russia and the United States. These would continue to be of paramount importance to the reduction of nuclear weapons and for their eventual elimination, and so also will be the future negotiations involving the other nuclear-weapon States. In such an ad hoc committee the international community, as represented by the Conference on Disarmament, should focus its attention on deliberating on the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons as well as to identify if and when one or more such steps should be the subject of negotiations in the Conference.

A step which has already been considered and identified is the cut-off treaty. The Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate this treaty should also be re-established without further delay. In South Africa's view, it is one of the essential foundation stones for the achievement of our common goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. It will only be by controlling fissile material that we can end the production and proliferation of further nuclear weapons, thereby creating the conditions for the elimination of all such weapons.

Breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament is of paramount importance not only to the international community, but also to the Conference itself. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the Conference on Disarmament will not be able to justify another wasted year. During the 1997 session, questions were already being asked about the Conference's continued functionality, and arguments have been raised as to whether other avenues of possible progress should not be sought.

While South Africa has generally been disappointed by the deadlock in disarmament during 1997, there have been a number of areas of progress. We have been encouraged by the large number of States which have committed themselves to the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction by acceding to various non-proliferation and disarmament treaties during the past year. Universal adherence to these treaties will pave the way towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat have been established and have made significant progress in this first year. We would again lend our voice to the call on all States to sign the CTBT and to work together for its early entry into force. States should also ensure that they meet their undertakings under the Treaty, both in its letter and in its spirit.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention this year was a major accomplishment. We are pleased that it has been possible to establish the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons quickly and that it has started to function. This is a tribute to the work done by the Treaty's Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat. The universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention remains an important goal for South Africa, and in this context we renew our call on the Russian Federation, as a major declared possessor of chemical weapons, to ratify the Treaty.

The intensification of the work in the Ad Hoc Group of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is also to be welcomed. It remains our conviction that the early conclusion of the Ad Hoc Group's work is dependent on the continued commitment and substantive participation of all the Treaty's States parties. In the interim, South Africa furthermore continues to encourage all the States parties to the BWC to participate in the Treaty's United Nations-administered confidence-building measures.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in terms of the strengthened review process agreed to at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference was also a success. The States Parties were able to change the nature of the Preparatory Committee from its previous procedural focus to addressing substantive issues. We look forward to the 1998 meeting of the Committee in Geneva, when we hope it will be able to continue with its substantive consideration of NPT-related issues and make time available for the security assurances, implementation of the resolution on the Middle East, and the fissile material cut-off treaty issues that were identified in the formal statement of the Chairman of the first Preparatory Committee.

Initiatives to increase the area of the world covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones have been bolstered by the decision of the Central Asian States to commence work on establishing such a zone in their region. These States are to be congratulated on the recent Tashkent Conference, and South Africa will continue to work with them in the accomplishment of their goal. We will also continue to give our support to the initiative to promote the southern hemisphere as a zone free from nuclear weapons.

In May this year the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) approved a model additional protocol in order to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system. This is in line with paragraph 11 of the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which calls for a strengthening of the IAEA's safeguards system in order to increase its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities. The Agency is to be commended for responding to the challenges posed to the safeguards system by adopting the additional protocol. These strengthened measures underline the determination of the international community to further enhance nuclear non-proliferation, and underscore the IAEA's importance as a vital component of global nuclear non-proliferation. It is, however, essential that, in order for the strengthened safeguards to have the desired effect, the nuclear-weapon States apply the provisions of the additional protocol, since, without their participation, the strengthened safeguards system will be significantly flawed. Similarly, South Africa calls for the universal application of the protocol in all States.

Humanity is faced with the daily threat of harm from the use of conventional weapons. These weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today, and it is thus our hope that a greater emphasis will be placed on conventional armaments in all disarmament forums. The rebuilding and prosperity of society that should be gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the proliferation of especially small arms and light weapons. A high priority should therefore be placed on strategies and policies intended to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons and to reduce their flow to conflict areas.

South Africa welcomes the Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which lays the foundation for future action by the international community to prevent and reduce the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons.

South Africa also continues to encourage all Member States of the United Nations to support and regularly participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Register remains a very important tool in building transparency and confidence, and we take note of the expert Group's report and their evaluation of the Register. South Africa is disappointed that no agreement could be reached on adjustments and technical aspects of the categories of weapons covered by the Register. Such adjustments could have resulted in broadening the present categories of weapons, thereby ensuring that the Register is more relevant for those countries that transfer weapons

falling just below the current definition of the seven categories of the Register.

On 18 September 1997 the Oslo Diplomatic Conference adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention represents a clear and total ban on anti-personnel mines and establishes a compelling new international norm against this scourge, which has so long been wrought on humanity, especially innocent civilians — mostly women and children. South Africa looks forward to the early entry into force of the Convention and appeals to all States to heed the call of the international community against these inhumane weapons. We will be joining those who are committed to the treaty by submitting to the General Assembly at this session a draft resolution inviting all States to sign and become parties to the Convention. At this point it is a pleasure for me and my Government to extend our congratulations to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and to Jody Williams, the Campaign's Coordinator, on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The achievement of the Convention in Oslo and the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the Campaign and Ms. Williams clearly demonstrate the will of the international community on this crucial issue.

South Africa has welcomed and given its support to the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. Of particular importance to us is the additional focus that he has placed on conventional weapons. We would, however, note that another part of the disarmament machinery that is in need of reform is the Conference on Disarmament itself. The Conference on Disarmament, which is funded by the United Nations membership as a whole, should be democratized so as to allow any member of the United Nations to become a member of the Conference itself. The weakness of argument that the Conference on Disarmament can only effectively function with a limited membership is demonstrated by the negotiations that have taken place under the umbrella of existing treaties and also by the Oslo Diplomatic Conference. The national security concerns and other concerns that States may have are protected by the Conference's rules of procedure and not by limited membership.

South Africa hopes that 1998 will be the year in which we will be able to resolve the stalemate that has overshadowed all our work this year. We remain committed to working in the First Committee and all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve our common goal of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and limiting the numbers of conventional weapons to those required for self-defence.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.